



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**  
**Courtney Greene**  
Wellmark Media Relations  
(515) 988-0918  
[GreeneCM@wellmark.com](mailto:GreeneCM@wellmark.com)

**CONTACT:**  
**Bruce Middlebrooks**  
Healthways Communications  
(615) 614-4463  
[bruce.middlebrooks@healthways.com](mailto:bruce.middlebrooks@healthways.com)

## **ELEVEN IOWA COMMUNITIES CLOSER TO BECOMING BLUE ZONES PROJECT DEMONSTRATION SITES**

### ***OVERWHELMING INTEREST AND STRONG APPLICATIONS LEAD WELLMARK TO EXPAND RESOURCES***

**DES MOINES, Iowa and NASHVILLE, Tenn. – February 10, 2012** – Since the initial announcement in September 2011 by Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® and Healthways (Nasdaq: HWAY), excitement continues to build in the Blue Zones Project™. This project is a centerpiece of the Healthiest State Initiative to make Iowa the healthiest state by 2016, as measured by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®.

The project is based on Blue Zones® principles developed by author Dan Buettner. Blue Zones employs evidence-based ways to help people live longer, better lives. The Company's work is rooted in the *New York Times* best-selling books *The Blue Zones* and *Thrive*—both published by National Geographic books. In 2009, Blue Zones applied the tenets of the books to Albert Lea, MN and successfully raised life expectancy and lowered health care costs for city workers by 40%. Blue Zones takes a systematic, environmental approach to well-being which focuses on optimizing policy, building design, social networks, and the built environment. The Blue Zones Project is based on this innovative approach. For more information, visit [www.bluezones.com](http://www.bluezones.com).

"I've found that the people who have the best well-being and are the healthiest don't take drastic steps to get fit, they live in environments that nudge them to move naturally, eat healthier foods and develop strong social networks," Buettner stated. The goal is for all Iowa communities to become Blue Zones and has been structured as a multi-round application process over five years to select 10 demonstration sites. Demonstration sites are communities in Iowa that will receive expert support to accelerate their Blue Zones transformation and serve as role models for all communities.

In the first application round (November 2011), 84 communities indicated an interest in becoming Blue Zones Project demonstration sites. Of these 84 communities, 58 were asked to submit a comprehensive application. On January 4, 2012, 54 communities submitted their applications to continue their journey to become a demonstration site.

"We are continually in pursuit of opportunities to reduce the rate of increase in health care costs for our customers. The Blue Zones Project is one of many ways that Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield is working with Iowans to reach this goal not only for our customers, but for all Iowans," said John Forsyth, Wellmark Chairman and CEO.

### **Eleven Communities Selected for Site Visits**

The applications submitted by the finalists reflected strong commitment from community leaders, local employers, and government officials, as well as prior success in collaborative community initiatives.



The 11 finalist communities in the first application round are:

|              |            |            |          |
|--------------|------------|------------|----------|
| Ames         | Clinton    | Muscatine  | Spencer  |
| Cedar Falls  | Davenport  | Ottumwa    | Waterloo |
| Cedar Rapids | Mason City | Sioux City |          |

In late February, the Blue Zones Project Team will begin visiting the 11 finalist communities in a series of site visits—which are similar to a job interview. The community will learn more about what it means to become a Blue Zones Community™ while the Blue Zones Project Team will have the opportunity to better understand each community’s readiness. Site visits conclude in March and the first round of demonstration sites will be announced in May 2012. For more information on the Blue Zones Project, visit [www.bluezonesproject.com](http://www.bluezonesproject.com).

### Review of Applications Leads To Expanded Resources for Smaller Communities

Wellmark Executive Vice President, Laura Jackson stated, “This work has never been done before on a statewide basis and in reviewing the extensive number of quality applications, coupled with the overwhelming interest across the state, we discovered there were clear differences among the communities. To meet the demand and diverse needs, we have developed opportunities for both large and small communities—leading to the same destination of becoming a Blue Zones Community.”

In March, Wellmark and Healthways will announce the smaller communities that have been selected for site visits. This will multiply the opportunities for all communities across the state from the original commitment of 10 demonstration sites to many more.

For all Iowa communities, tools will be available to help them continue their path to improved well-being. The Blue Zones Institute™ will provide leadership training and tools to help leaders transform their community, work and home environments. “We want to encourage all Iowans to continue their journey to improve their well-being through programs such as the Blue Zones Institute,” said Mary Lawyer, Healthways state director of the Blue Zones Project. “It is important for communities to choose the path that is right for them. Some communities may choose a self-directed approach. Others may choose to apply to be a demonstration site in subsequent rounds.” Additionally, based on the strong response from employers in communities across the State, Wellmark and Healthways have agreed to explore an expansion of well-being improvement solutions for employers in the State of Iowa. Details are being discussed and will be announced at a future date.

### Timeline of Key Milestones

| Larger Communities  | Determine demonstration site finalists | Complete site visits     |                      | Determine 3-4 demonstration sites | Blue Zones Institute demonstration site training          |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 2012                | February                               | March                    | April                | May                               | Summer  |
| Smaller Communities |  | Determine site finalists | Complete site visits |                                   | Determine selected sites<br>Blue Zones Institute launches |

### About Wellmark

Wellmark, Inc. ([www.wellmark.com](http://www.wellmark.com)) does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Wellmark and its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, including Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc., insure or pay health benefit claims for more than 2 million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

### About Healthways

Healthways is the leading provider of specialized, comprehensive solutions to help millions of people maintain or improve their health and well-being and, as a result, reduce overall costs. Healthways’ solutions are designed to help healthy individuals stay healthy, mitigate or eliminate lifestyle risk factors that can lead to disease and optimize care for those with chronic illness. Our proven, evidence-based programs provide highly specific and personalized interventions for each individual in a population, irrespective of age or health status, and are delivered to consumers by phone, mail, internet and face-to-face interactions, both domestically and internationally. Healthways also provides a national, fully accredited complementary and alternative Health Provider Network and a national Fitness Center Network, offering convenient access to individuals who seek health services outside of, and in conjunction with, the traditional healthcare system. For more information, please visit [www.healthways.com](http://www.healthways.com).